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ABSTRACT

Established in 1884 and operative for nearly a century, Chilocco Indian School (Oklahoma) was a federal off-reservation boarding school intended to assimilate American Indian children into mainstream American life. In contrast to previous studies detailing federal policy and practice in such boarding schools, this book draws on and analyzes interviews with 61 Native Americans who attended Chilocco in the 1920s and 1930s. In recollections juxtaposed against official records of racist ideology and repressive practice, these alumni recall their loneliness and demoralization, but also remember the love and mutual support binding them together, their creative rebellions against authority, the forging of new pan-Indian identities and reinforcement of old tribal ones, the skills and trades they mastered, and the leadership they developed. This book examines the relations of power within the school to comprehend federal disciplinary practice and the strategies Indian children devised to escape it. Peer group solidarity was essential to student resistance, but the nature of peer groups differed between boys and girls and among different age groups. Appendices describe interview participants and methodology. This book contains 95 secondary references (in addition to school and federal records), photographs, and an index. (SV)

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